



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

April 2017 Newsletter

Mule Deer to Get Much Needed Help

Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall and several partners just received \$1.5 million from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust and Wyoming Legislature for continued mule deer habitat improvements in the Wyoming Range. Randall says they received an additional \$155,000 from Exxon for the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Habitat Project, which began in 2014. The money will cover expenses for a variety of habitat improvements over the next three years on BLM, private and State lands near Big Piney and LaBarge.

Since 2014, habitat managers have completed 8,252 acres of sagebrush thinning to promote grasses and forbs; 2,108 acres of aspen mechanical preparation; 454 acres of aspen prescribed burns; 4,350 acres of cheatgrass control; 1,970 acres cheatgrass grubbing; the hiring of four livestock riders; 11 miles of wildlife-friendly fence constructed and one reservoir was renovated.

The new money will pay for habitat treatments to include conifer cutting within aspen stands, prescribed burns to promote aspen, both mechanical and chemical (Spike) shrub treatments, post-treatment livestock management and weed control. Randall has habitat treatments planned to benefit mule deer and other species through 2023.

The ambitious multi-year project will achieve roughly 28,000 acres of vegetation treatments in key locations and 20,000 acres of cheatgrass control, for an estimated total ten year cost of approximately \$4 million.





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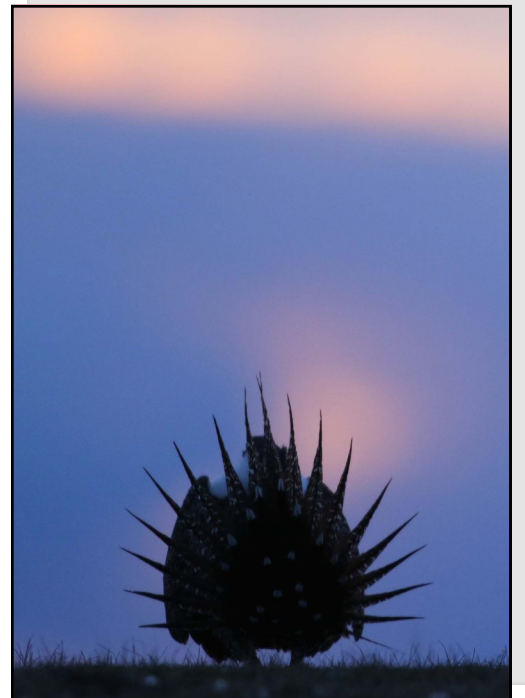
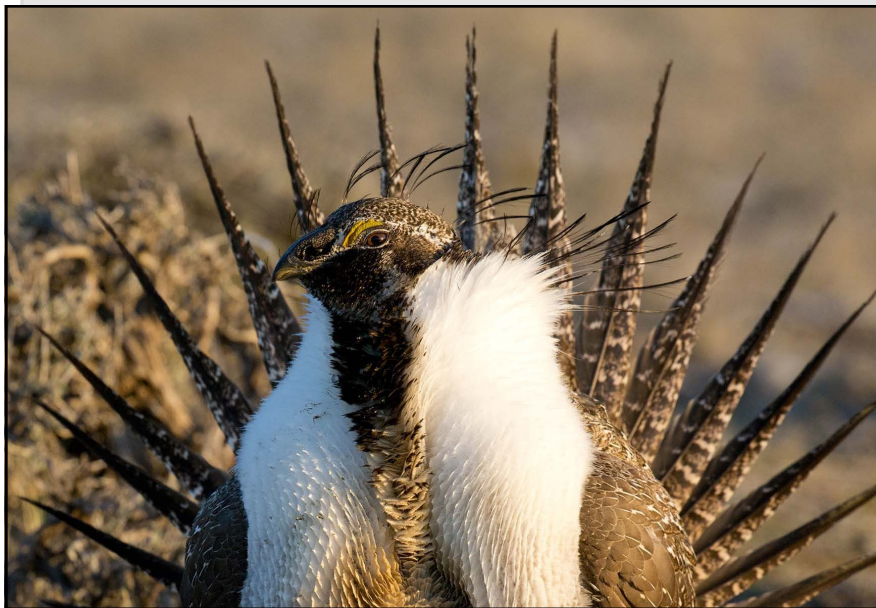
Sage Grouse Showtime

It's that thrilling time of year when sage grouse are gathering to perform their annual spring mating ritual on area strutting grounds, called leks. Leks are often located in open areas where the males can be better seen and heard by females.

The dramatic display makes viewing sage grouse a popular recreational activity in April and even into May across much of Wyoming. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department recently updated its lek viewing guide to help birders find accessible leks around the state and minimize viewing disturbance to the grouse. The guide and associated maps can be viewed or downloaded from the [Game and Fish Sage Grouse Lek Viewing Guide](#).



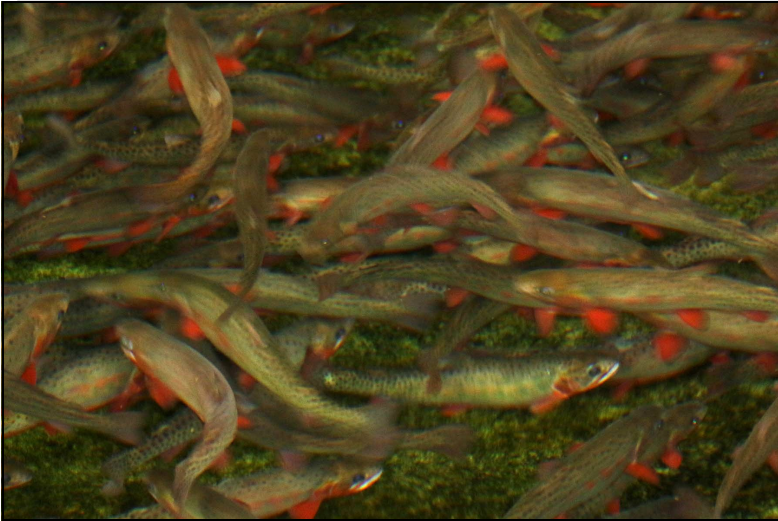
Pinedale Game & Fish personnel are currently getting out early to count the number of birds on leks in the region to keep tabs population trends. Each fall, hunters deposit wings from harvested birds in "wing barrels" for biologists to analyze and determine a chick:hen ratio. In 2016, this data showed a ratio of .6 chicks per hen, which was down from previous years for this area. This level of productivity is typically associated with a declining population. After a couple of strong years, managers are expecting numbers to be down some this year.





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Spawning Colorado River Cutts

The Daniel Hatchery crew is currently in the throes of their annual Colorado River cutthroat spawn. Once a week, for a couple months, the crew gathers eggs and milt from their brood stock to fertilize and eventually hatch the eggs. Last year a total of 620,000 eggs were collected. Once hatched, the fish are reared to be stocked in a variety of waters across the Cowboy State. The Colorado River cutthroat was petitioned for listing as an endangered species in 2000. It was determined to be warranted, but was not listed in favor of concentrating on other species in greater

need. The Game and Fish Department's Daniel Hatchery is the sole source of Colorado River cutts for Wyoming and is vital in keeping the species from being listed. Fish will be stocked in several area waters later this summer. The parent fish are from North Piney Lake in the Wyoming Range.



Photos: (Upper left) Brood fish at the Daniel Hatchery showing off their bright spawning colors (right) Daniel Hatchery Superintendent Tim Kurtz collects eggs from a five-year-old female Colorado River cutthroat trout. (Below) A Colorado River cutthroat being released into its native habitat in 40-rod Creek. (Left) A tray of "eyed" eggs being grown at the Daniel Hatchery from trout previously spawned.





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Mule Deer: Winter Impacts

It's no secret we're coming off one of the harder winters we've seen in a quite a while. Each year, wardens and biologists count the number of mule deer fawns they see in relation to adult does, both at the beginning of winter and again at the end, to determine the percentage loss. Fawns are counted because they are typically the age class that is hit the hardest by winter. This year, the over-winter fawn loss in the Wyoming Range is estimated at approximately 86%, which is the highest biologists have documented in over 20 years.



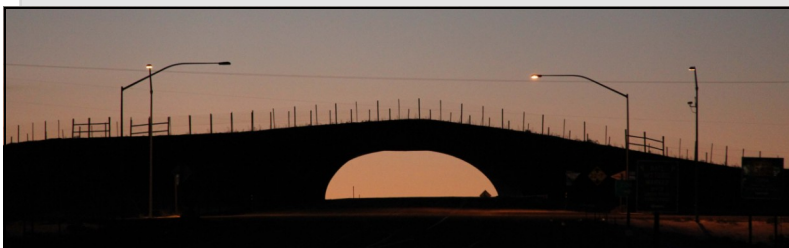
Pronghorn on the Move

Cameras mounted on the Trapper's Point wildlife crossing overpass documented the first group of pronghorn crossing the structure on April 13, with several groups crossing in the following days. The live video feed from the web-cameras mounted at Trapper's Point can be viewed at: <http://www.trapperspoint.com/>

It is estimated that wildlife-vehicle collisions have been reduced approximately 80 percent since the wildlife crossing structures were installed in 2012. Reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions will be the topic of a two-day summit to be held at the Pinedale library on

April 26-27. It is free and open to the public.

With big game now on the move, migrating back to their summer ranges, motorists are asked to keep a close watch for animals along area roadways.





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From the Front Desk...

With the weather transitioning from winter to spring, Pinedale Game and Fish office managers Lori Johnson and Kristen Draney remind boaters that all watercraft powered by any type of motor are required to have a registration number. Drift boats and canoes do not require state registration, but when a motor of any kind is used, the watercraft must be registered.

Watercraft owners can renew their registration online at the Game & Fish website: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Fishing-and-Boating/Boating-and-Watercraft> or at any G&F office. New watercraft registrations must be done with an application to the Watercraft Section at the G&F Cheyenne Headquarters. Application forms may be obtained at the web address above or at any G&F regional office.

Applicants are required to provide information with the application, including Proof of Ownership (notarized), Proof of Wyoming Sales Tax, and the license fee. Watercraft may be registered for a one-year at \$15.00 or a three-year period for \$40.00. All watercraft registrations expire at the end of the calendar year and fees are not transferable or refundable if the watercraft is sold.

Watercraft owners are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the **Wyoming Watercraft Regulations** available on the Game & Fish website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations#Watercraft-Regulation> or at any G&F office or license vendor. Additional information can be found at the Game & Fish website or by calling the Cheyenne Office at: 1-800-842-1934 and asking for the Watercraft Section.

In addition, boaters are required by law to have a "life jacket", or Personal Flotation Device (PFD), for everyone on board when they take to the water in Wyoming and all children twelve years old and under to wear a PFD at all times while the watercraft is underway.

Commission Regulation reads "All watercraft shall carry a U.S. Coast Guard approved wearable personal flotation device of suitable size for each person on board. All U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices shall be readily accessible, in good condition and shall not be waterlogged, torn, or have straps broken or missing. This includes rafts and drift boats. In addition, if the boat is 16 feet or longer, a Type IV throwable flotation device is required.



Green River Ice Jam

The Green River experienced a series of ice damming incidents when the river thawed in mid-March near LaBarge. Chunks of broken ice floated downstream, jamming together in large rafts for one to three days at a time. (Right) Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea examines equipment set up to detect PIT-tagged burbot as they swim by. The equipment was inundated when a massive ice jam formed and flooded the area.

